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**Ambassador Barshefsky Welcomes African Trade Ministers
Announces \$2.5 Million for WTO Related Technical Assistance for Africa
Welcomes News of Agreement on Africa/CBI Trade Bill**

United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky today welcomed Trade Ministers from eight African nations and senior trade officials from African regional organizations taking part in the U.S.-Africa Trade Forum this week. The objective of the Forum is to increase the dialogue between the United States and African countries on World Trade Organization (WTO) issues and to provide high-level technical assistance on the more complex aspects of key WTO agreements. Ambassador Barshefsky also announced \$2.5 million for WTO-related technical assistance for Africa.

“This conference will help us set the framework for U.S.-African cooperation at the World Trade Organization as the new millennium begins,” said Ambassador Barshefsky. “It is a chance for us to assess the progress we have made since the opening of President Clinton’s Partnership Initiative for Africa in 1997, to build on the areas in which our work has succeeded, and to find areas in which we can still do better.”

Ambassador Barshefsky also welcomed the announcement that Congress has come to an agreement on the Africa-Caribbean Basin Initiative trade bill. “At long last, this critical legislation is nearing the finish line. Expanding duty-free access to U.S. markets for the Caribbean and for the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa has been a central trade priority for this Administration. This bill represents a number of concrete steps that would create a framework for expanding economic growth and opportunity in both regions. We look forward to working with Congress on final passage,” she said.

The three-day Forum will include technical assistance roundtables, private sector consultations, and a Congressional Roundtable hosted by Congressman Charles Rangel (D-NY). The Forum is one step in a broader process to support African countries’ integration into the multilateral trading system. The United States has and will continue to pursue other avenues for exchange of views

and provision of technical assistance, including bilateral meetings, formal mechanisms such as Trade and Investment Framework Agreements, and technical assistance projects aimed at improving WTO and trade-related capacity.

The \$2.5 million for WTO related technical assistance for Africa is being funded under the Africa Trade and Investment Policy program and includes \$1.75 million for customs related assistance, a \$400,000 contribution to the WTO for courses in Africa, and \$550,000 to expand U.S. sponsored WTO workshops in Africa.

The President's Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa (Partnership Initiative) was announced in 1997. The Partnership Initiative embodies key policy objectives essential to stimulating economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa and facilitating Africa's integration into the global economy. Such objectives include support for economic reforms and growth underway in the region, enhanced U.S. economic engagement with Sub-Saharan Africa, support for Africa's full incorporation into the multilateral trading system, and support for sustainable economic development.